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754 "This time I will respect my husband and leave the child to him", but the next one she makes her own.' Occasionally, it is said, pythons may be acquired in childhood from a woman, or perhaps even a fellow herd-boy, who is a witch, and who transfers his or her witchcraft by giving the child some mysterious substance to eat, but it is the inherited character of witchcraft which is emphasized.

754 Witchcraft (*ubulosi*) is sharply distinguished from sorcery (*ubutege*), that is, the illegal use of destructive medicines, for it is
763 a physiological condition, not merely the manipulation of certain materials. The pythons are believed to be visible in an autopsy, a 'swollen bowel' (*ubula*) in a corpse being the typical mark of a witch. 'When the bowel is swollen, they take it out and say: "It is a python, he was a witch".' Some educated Nyakyusa maintain that the 'swollen bowel' is, in some cases at least, acute tapeworm; however that may be, the condition of the bowel is taken as conclusive evidence. 'If', said Mwangwanda, 'a man is accused of witchcraft during his lifetime, and then at the autopsy his bowels are found not to be swollen, people admit his innocence, saying: "We accused him falsely, see, he was pure!" '

ii. The supposed activities of witches

754 The typical crime of the witch, in Nyakyusa belief, is to harm men and cattle, and the motive is greed. The pythons are thought to lust for meat and milk, hence witches go in dreams by night to 'eat people inside', and to milk the cows of their neighbours. 'It is said', explained one of our friends, 'that throttling (*ukupita*) is in order to eat delicious food. The witches say that human flesh is delicious, and the milk of cows is also delicious' (cf. Document, p. 218). Another friend elaborated further: 'People say that it is the pythons of a witch that cause him to go and bewitch (*ukuloga*) the milk, because they wish to drink milk. When he has throttled the cows they are satisfied. And they are satisfied with human flesh when "he of the pythons" has eaten a man. So I hear. I have heard too, that if the pythons smell meat (of an animal killed for eating) and if people grudge meat to him (or her) of the pythons, then the pythons will fly with him to throttle people and eat them. Similarly smelling milk leads to the throttling of cows.' The stock myth of witchcraft (cf. Document, p. 217) is about a

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754 627 695 Sometimes the individuals concerned did not actually take the ordeal themselves, but each was represented by one of his or her children, as when Mwaisumo's mother was accused of bewitching the village cows, and one of her younger sons drank the *umwafi* representing her (cf. Document, p. 241). Very often the ordeal was used to discover which *group* was responsible for the trouble, whether it was the father's people or the mother's, or perhaps the village, and a child was chosen to represent each group and given the poison. Mwaisumo himself had drunk *umwafi* as a child, representing his father's people (cf. Document, p. 244). And a sceptic explained that each family chose a member who vomited readily—his family was always represented by a certain daughter who vomited *umwafi* immediately.

The ordeal is only administered nowadays in the greatest secrecy, and probably very rarely, for informants who had no hesitation in discussing with us witchcraft accusations and trials of supposed witches, though these were well known to be illegal, denied that the ordeal was administered. The most recent example we traced occurred in 1932.

763 787 754 So far we have only dealt with cases in which witchcraft is suspected as the cause of illness among men, or of a decrease in the milk supply. The matter is more serious if someone has actually died. If there is any doubt as to the cause of death, an autopsy is performed, and a diagnosis made from the condition of the stomach and intestines. 'Wounds' or scars in the stomach are taken as evidence of attacks by witches, and a black oily substance in the bowel, or red streaked with black and white, is a mark of sorcery; if the bowel is swollen, or if the entrails burst out of the incision, it is proof that the deceased was himself a witch, and was probably killed in a quarrel with fellow witches. Death due to a relative having been bound with ropes (cf. Document, p. 249), or a disease of the bowels (*ikitasya*) attributed to natural causes, is also thought to be apparent at an autopsy. Some maintain too, that the source of witchcraft can be discovered from the examination, wounds on the right side of the stomach indicating that the witch is a member of the father's family, or of the age-village; wounds on the left indicating that he is a member of the mother's family (cf. Document p. 246).

At the autopsy the crowd is kept at a distance and usually only one or two senior relatives or neighbours, the headman of the

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village, and the doctor who operates are present. Occasionally their judgement is challenged.

'Once an old pagan woman, whose husband was reputed to have been a witch, demanded an autopsy. When they opened the stomach the entrails (*elitondobeli*) jumped out. [When the entrails jump out this way they say "the python is fighting".] The observers looked, and said to the doctor, "All right, all right, bind him up again!" But the widow objected, saying, "No, come near all of you." She called all the people and went to the corpse, and tore open the stomach. All cried out, saying: "Alas! do not do that. It is forbidden." Then she turned to the old people and said: "Is there anything here? Nothing! He is only a witch by hearsay. Yes, indeed, just because the entrails jumped out you convicted him." ' For detailed accounts of two of the autopsies observed see the Document on pp. 247–50.

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In the past the source of witchcraft was always confirmed through the ordeal; nowadays divination with the rubbing-board is sometimes used instead. Mwamunda described the procedure: 'The custom of drinking *umwafi* has ceased, but some, when a person has died, perhaps a child, make an autopsy. . . . Then, if they find wounds of witchcraft (*efilonda efya manga*) the father and the mother of the child go to a doctor to divine, but they do not drink *umwafi*, they divine with the rubbing-board. Perhaps the divination indicates the mother. She then goes to her father, and he goes to divine with his wife, the grandmother of the dead child. If he (the grandfather) is then indicated he next takes his kinsmen with him, and when the divination indicates one of them the man will say: "This divination is nonsense; it always deceives." But others will think him guilty and say: "A kinsman was caught, he had eaten his grandchild." Or perhaps the divination indicates the father of the dead child. If so he divines again asking: "Is it relatives, or is it the country?" (For a man has a country, not a woman.) Then perhaps the divination will show that it is not relatives, but the "breath of God" (*Kyala*), that is to say other people, non-relatives. Or perhaps the divination indicates the father of the dead child and his relatives; and if so the father goes with his kinsmen and one of them is indicated. Then the father goes again with the man indicated by the previous divination, to confirm the verdict. Before going to court he asks himself: "How shall I bring a case which depends for evidence on divination?

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objection to marrying the child of one who has been convicted is clearly not pushed to its logical conclusion. No slur is cast on any one lineage when an individual is convicted of witchcraft, for he may have inherited it from either parent, or even got it from a friend; conversely no lineage is cleared by an autopsy, for not all the children of a witch are necessarily witches. Thus a man may have a father or brother or son who is 'pure', yet be a witch himself. As we have seen, even persons belonging to the same lineage may occasionally accuse each other. Nevertheless, when an individual who is reputed to be a witch dies, the close relatives do sometimes insist on an autopsy, in order to clear the deceased of suspicion, and possibly themselves also (*vide supra*, p. 117). In one case we recorded it was a daughter who insisted on the autopsy being performed on her mother, a reputed witch. No witchcraft was found.

So far we have dealt with cases of misfortune befalling an individual, followed by action against a fellow villager who is suspected of being responsible. This type of case is far the commonest within the field of witchcraft. When a general misfortune, such as a plague or epidemic, threatens, the chiefdom acts as a whole, not the villages separately, and the ritual is directed primarily to securing the blessing of the shades. There is some suggestion of ridding the chiefdom of witchcraft at the same time, but the emphasis is on appeasing the ancestors. The traditional new year cleansing (*ukutag' ikikungu*), now rarely performed, was also the concern of chiefdoms not separate villages, and it involved prayer to the ancestors.

b. The age-village and the ancestors

We have dwelt at length on witchcraft and 'the breath of men', for, in Nyakyusa belief, the defence of the village against witches and the punishment of wrong-doers by 'the breath' of their fellows is the main corporate activity of the village in the religious sphere. There are no village rituals directed to the ancestors comparable to those performed on behalf of lineages and chiefdoms. Indeed, belief in the power of shades operates only in situations where social position is determined by descent, as it is in lineages and in the succession to chieftainship. The office of village headman is not hereditary. The son of a village headman

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his village headmen. In some villages the 'elder' is both a religious leader and a secular authority, but there is a tendency to separate the two offices and to appoint a 'peacemaker' whose duty it is to settle disputes, collect taxes, and represent the village in its relationships with the chief and the administration, while the 'elder' confines himself to watching over the spiritual welfare of his people. Such division of authority is symptomatic of the growing differentiation of Nyakyusa society.

e. Witchcraft, medicines, and the British administration

Under British administration the use of the *umwafi* ordeal, imputation of witchcraft, intimidation or obtaining goods under false pretences by threats of witchcraft or sorcery, or offers of protection against them, are punishable offences. As we have seen, the ordeal is now administered only in the greatest secrecy, and probably very seldom, but accusations of witchcraft are frequent, and are even heard before the Native Courts, though not recorded (*vide* Document, p. 257). In the villages near the Government station more caution is observed in making accusations than in more remote parts of the district: very often the identity of the witch is only hinted at, or thorns are piled at his door by persons who remain anonymous (*vide supra*, p. 114) so that no individual can be convicted of imputing witchcraft. As one man put it: '"The defenders" see the witches, but cannot name them to anyone.' Autopsies continue in conservative villages but they are no longer performed on every corpse, as is said to have been customary in the old days. The chief Porokoto, himself a sceptic, argued that it was no use performing an autopsy when a charge could not be laid. If the members of a village are all convinced that a particular fellow is a witch he is forced to move, since his unpopularity becomes intolerable to him (*supra*, pp. 110–5). As Mwambuputa put it: 'We don't like him, and he doesn't like us either: he does not enjoy our company (*atikwangala na nuswe*), so he moves.' But if the friction is only between two individuals, the supposed witch may brazen it out, for without resort to the *umwafi* ordeal there is no sure means of deciding between the accuser and the accused.

The prohibition of witch-finding is not accepted as right and just: the common view is that the Europeans 'protect the witches',

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(*d*) *Sorcery* (Ubutege) — MISFORTUNES ATTRIBUTED TO MYSTICAL CAUSES—contd.

No.	Category of victim	Category of accused	Category of accuser	Spatial relationship of victim and accuser	Charge	Grounds of suspicion	Investigation	Upshot of case
1	Chief	'People'	Chief and one of his village headman	Other chiefdoms	Made chief ill	Envy of chief having a court. Illness of chief.		
2	Conquered chief	Conquering chief (pre-European)		Different villages but same country (after the conquest)	Conquered had killed conqueror by sorcery	Mwamakula had taken Mwaseba's country. Death of conqueror		
3	Christian who became very popular by feeding men. People said he would 'kill' the position of the accused because of his popularity	Senior village headman X		Same village	X sought medicine to work sorcery against the Christian	X envied popularity of new-comer. He was overheard by neighbours saying he would work sorcery. Serious illness of Christian followed		
4	Child of P.	Classificatory brother of P.	P., father of victim	Different chiefdoms		Quarrel over inheritance of cattle. P's brother claimed cows from him. Case went to court of defendant's chief. Decided in his favour		
5	Man (Mwanyilu) and his wife	Not specified	Son of deceased (Mwambete)			Death of Mwanyilu and his wife	Autopsy on Mwanyilu. Found a powder, thought to be *ubutege* medicine, in his stomach. No autopsy on wife but 'know that she died from the same disease'	Family drank protective medicine
6	2 wives of X. Sister of X. 1 married daughter and another child. Husband of married daughter					All died within a short time of one another. Sorcery spread through autopsies	Autopsies	Family drank medicines provided by a doctor and the illness ceased

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MISFORTUNES ATTRIBUTED TO MYSTICAL CAUSES—contd.

No.	Category of victim	Category of accused	Category of accuser	Spatial relationship of victim and accuser	Charge	Grounds of suspicion	Investigation	Upshot of case
7	Daughter of A. Son and daughter of A's full brother B	A accused X, his parallel cousin (child of A's father's brother). X accused A	A, father and brother of victims		Use of sorcery against one another	Junior brother's son wanted inheritance divided. Elder brother's son (A) did not. This was followed by illness of victims	Suggested by doctor that trouble due to sorcery or to anger of ancestors over family quarrel	Open discussion of quarrel (*ukwiputa*). Drank medicine against sorcery. Also prayer to ancestors
8	Child of neighbour B	Man X	Neighbour B.	Same village	Sent his leopard to kill the child	Child killed by leopard on day after X had quarrelled with accuser B, saying B's cattle were eating his crops	X asked for ordeal. This refused	X driven out of country by chief. Later returned
9	Foreman and clerk A, very lucky in striking gold and favourite of his employer	Fellow clerk B.		Same camp	B accused of killing A by sorcery	A died suddenly at his house. B was very jealous of A's wealth, and had spoken in secret of his desire to kill A by sorcery, saying 'may he die at his house'		
10	Wife of village headman					Death	Autopsy. Symptoms of sorcery found	
11	Man who had run off with another's wife	Injured husband	Victim	Victim on Lupa. Injured husband in Iringa (300 miles distant)	Husband blowing medicines at the seducer of his wife (i.e. working sorcery—*ubutege*. The husband's friends might have classed this as vengeance magic)	Continued illness of victim	Divination by a doctor	Victim treated with medicines. Moved to another house. He finally recovered, but his host fell ill

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9. METHODS OF WITCHCRAFT

Mwaikambo (clerk).

754 'We people think that the witches have pythons (*isota*) in their stomachs. It is these which have power to change so that they fly. We say a man cannot work witchcraft without a python, but only when he has one. The python can come out of the stomach and enter again. When the python has gone to throttle someone only the witch's body remains. It is said that this body has no strength, and cannot get up; sometimes it can speak a little, sometimes it cannot speak. It is referred to as "a hide".

'When the pythons have come to the place where they are going to eat people, they are said to take out the teeth of others which they use to eat with. They do not eat with their own teeth. When they have "eaten" someone they return the teeth. It is said that if a person wakens before they return his teeth, and cries out that his teeth have gone, then his teeth will disappear all together. He will only have gums in his mouth. The witches do not carry spears with which to bewitch. I, and others also, are surprised at this, for when an autopsy is performed I have never heard it said that tooth-marks have been found, but always that spear wounds have been found. And some, when they wake up in the morning, have said: "My teeth are loose." Then others tell them: "The witches ate with your teeth in the night."

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'Witches fight a very fierce war in their supernatural strength (*kumanga gwabo*). It is said that they fight with spears. Those of one village do not fight, but the village of one chief (*sic*) fights against the village of another chief. When the witches of one chief try to kill another chief the latter's men fight them and save their chief. Hence it sometimes happens that the chief kills cattle for his people to thank them for having fought for him.

'Sometimes witchcraft is directed at food or a brewing of beer, causing it to rot. When the witches have spoiled the beer it is not nice. The witches spoil other things like this by means of their witchcraft with pythons.

'When the witches go to "eat" a person, two or four may go together or one may go alone. When they go they travel with the strength of the python; they leave a "skin", or body only. When they come to the person they throw away their teeth; they take the teeth of him whom they are going to eat, and eat with them. And one whose teeth have been returned knows in the morning that the witches used his teeth. We are warned that if ever we find no teeth in our mouths we must not

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754 627 695 'There are some in our country who were caught for witchcraft, for "eating" people and throttling cows. The name of one of them was Sumali, but now he is dead; another is Mwaimama. They denied the accusation very strongly; they were brought before the chief (my father) for their case to be judged, and when he had given judgement they said they wished to go to *umwafi*. So they went to the *umwafi*, and when they had drunk it Sumali vomited and Mwaimama was conquered. Nothing happened to him—he was not driven out, they just told him to stop doing such things—but continually, even now, he is accused of witchcraft whenever anything happens. He's not gone to *umwafi* again.

'This happened before I went to school, when I was still herding cows, about 1925 or 1926. I did not see the trial (before the chief) with my own eyes, but I was there when the *umwafi* was administered.

'On another occasion a woman was "caught" for witchcraft when her child died. When they do an autopsy they sometimes find wounds on the right side or on the left. The right side is the side of the man, the left that of the woman. This time they found them on the side of the woman. The woman (i.e. the mother) denied that it was she who had "eaten" the child so they went to *umwafi* and the woman was "conquered" (i.e. proved to be lying). It was not she, in her own person, but a member of her lineage who had "eaten" the child. After the *umwafi* had "spoken" they went to a diviner to discover exactly who the individual was.

'I heard about this from others, but Mwasintobile, the father of the child who died, is a man of our country—I know him.'

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26. THE AUTOPSY

Note.—It was not easy to see an autopsy among the Nyakyusa—one never knew beforehand when such an operation would be held, and since imputations of witchcraft and sorcery are punishable offences, people were often reluctant to perform it when Europeans were there. There was only one European doctor in Rungwe district, and he was a very busy man with a hospital and dispensaries to supervise. All the operations witnessed were performed over twenty-five miles from his headquarters and far off any road. Therefore, we were never able to arrange for a qualified practitioner to be present at a Nyakyusa autopsy, as we wished. The following layman's accounts, though lacking any anatomical detail, explain the method of procedure, and the Nyakyusa reactions.

Autopsy (ukupandula) *witnessed by G. W.*, 16/3/37.

Funeral of the wife of Mwampiki: Mwampiki himself is dead, but his homestead and wives have been inherited by a younger half-brother, Mwisalwa. The dead woman is a wife of another half-brother, Mwalemba. Kakuju, the village headman, called me to the funeral.

The body was carried apart, away from the crowd of women, behind a clump of bananas, by five or six women, who then washed it and put on a bark-cloth and a cloth (folded tight like a bark-cloth) round the loins. Then the young man, Mwaijumba, and I were allowed to come and watch.

The doctor, a woman, had five little knives of bamboo, made for the autopsy, and thrown away with the rubbish afterwards. Before she began to cut the stomach open another woman, a wife of Mwampiki (wearing mourning belts and smeared with mud) came and crouched down with her face close to that of the corpse, and a cloth covering her head and that of the corpse. 'That is the Nyakyusa custom', the young man explained. 'She is helping the doctor. The fearsomeness (*ubuniya*) of a human body is less when someone else is at the head.'

Then the doctor, using the bamboo knives, made an incision across the stomach, and cut through the flesh until the intestines showed. The stomach was swollen up. Mwantembe, a classificatory brother of Mwampiki, had joined us by this time. He was fetched by Mwaijumba to come and examine the corpse. He urged the doctor to make the incision wider and she did so. Mwantembe also insisted on Mwai-

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763 jumba coming close and looking, too. 'Come, Mwaijumba, look, so that another time you will know.' He did not give direct instruction—he was far too much worked up—but he insisted on the other coming to see what was being done and discussed.

At several points the doctor was clearly under the stress of emotion and reluctant to do more than was absolutely necessary—she had to be urged on by Mwantembe. 'Now,' Mwantembe said, 'let us dissect, mother! Let us look well. Let us dissect! Do you say it's a person? No, it's just a log, a piece of firewood!' And several times these words were used by Mwantembe and others to urge her on. 'Do you say it's a person? It's just a log!'

The doctor then pulled out all the contents of the stomach so that Mwantembe and the women could see up into the chest—there was nothing unusual there on either side; then we looked downwards into the loins and found something unusual—a round growth full of blood. I asked if it was a foetus but was told: 'No, it is not; we don't know what it is. We don't ordinarily find that. It is something evil (*lindo*, literally "rubbish"). We are afraid.' The growth was taken out, and also the upper intestine, for there was said to be something unusual about that too, and the liver and something else (*akasongo*). These, I think, are always removed. We were not told of anything unusual about them. The doctor herself made few or no suggestions—it was Mwantembe who did that—she just did the operation silently.

The stench was foul—several of the women put stoppers of banana leaf into both nostrils. Half-way through the woman at the head of the corpse got up, looking overwrought, and went away to a distance. The others said: 'It's all right, it's not a person, just a log' (*i.e.* there is no need for her to stay). At length the doctor pushed the rest of the organs back into the stomach and tied up the body with a cloth—another was tied over it to make all secure.

757 The discussion (which had been going on spasmodically all the
763 time) broke out in a flood. People nodded to each other and said: 'Sorcery (*ubutege*)! Look! Look! Sorcery indeed!' The young man, Mwaijumba, told us: 'I dreamed of a medicine. When they were at the funeral [the dead woman had been taken ill while at a funeral at her classificatory father's homestead], before she fell ill, I dreamed in my sleep, I saw someone giving a child a banana, but I caught hold of the banana (all in my sleep). I broke it open and I found a powder there in the banana. So then I sent a message to her (the next day when I was awake), saying: "Come home. You have mourned sufficiently." And that very day I fell ill myself.' He told this with great excitement. Mwantembe also was obviously moved and said several times during the autopsy: 'I'm afraid. I'm afraid.'

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Then Kakuju, the village headman, and Kissogota (an old man, a village headman of the previous generation) came to see the results of the autopsy—the things extracted. The doctor had made a small incision in the thing chiefly suspected—the round growth full of blood and measuring five or six inches in diameter. Kakuju got very excited and insisted on her making a bigger incision to see what was inside. 'Look well!' he shouted, 'You are our ordeal (*umuaji*). We know this illness which is killing people in the country. We know it. We know it (passionately). It's sorcery (*ubutege*), is it not?' Mwantembe then said: 'See, it is sorcery, see!' showing him all that had been extracted. Both Kakuju and Kissogota agreed and then Kissogota said: '*Igobe!*' At this word the tension seemed to relax. Kakuju jumped at it. 'Yes, yes (eagerly) *igobe*. Is it not *igobe*, Mwaipeja?' (passionately to me) '*Igobe*,' Mwantembe repeated. '*Igobe*', shouted the women. Kakuju and Kissogota walked away talking. Then all the remains (*i.e.* the growth, etc.) and the bamboo knives were buried apart in the waste land, and the body was buried in the usual way.

Angombwike later explained that *igobe* was an old word for *ubutege* (sorcery).

Autopsy (ukupandula), *witnessed by G. W.*, 23/3/37.

Funeral of little granddaughter of Mwaihojo (a chief)—daughter of Mwaihojo's son Mwakisisile—aged one year. Child died last night. Funeral at Mwaihojo's homestead.

The doctor, a woman, cut the stomach open crosswise and pulled out the contents of the stomach. 'See that little black thing, branching!' They looked all over thoroughly, up and down. 'Look carefully, people of Selya!' said the doctor. 'You tell lies! You will go and tell lies! Look carefully! See, there is no *ibitanya* (a disease).' All agreed that there was no sign of *ibitanya*, but no positive opinion was expressed till two men had been fetched to look. They came and said: 'Why do you deny it? Why do you not know the disease from ropes (*engoje*)?' 'Yes,' replied the women, 'but we said we should let the men look first.' Before the men came and gave utterance to the word *engoje*, the women had, I think, come to the same conclusion; it was clear from the way the doctor pointed out 'the little black thing, branching' that she was certain what it meant, and they nodded in an understanding way. Only when she asked them: 'Look, what is it?' they would not answer, saying: 'We don't know, you are a doctor who understands these things.' Then, instead of saying what she thought, she asked: 'Aren't the men coming to look?'

The men came back to Mwaihojo and repeated: 'It is the disease

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from ropes, that binding. The women were uncertain.' 'Yes, indeed,' replied Mwalhojo. 'Whenever did women know how to perform an autopsy? They don't know how to do it. They only know how to close the corpse again, that's all.'

A woman lay down with her head to that of the corpse under cloths. The other women told her to do this, saying: 'At the head, at the head! You are both brave, you, too!'

The doctor removed the liver, two other parts, and the bile sack. This latter she squeezed out on to the leaves, saying: 'Medicine, medicine, she drank much medicine.' All these she wrapped up in leaves and buried in the foot of the grave.

It was explained that the ropes (*engoje*) were those of Mwakisisile. Mwakisisile, the father, had gone mad (*abapaga ibigili*) and had drunk medicine before he had married this woman. 'We forget to give them both medicine later on. When he went mad we bound him with ropes to take him to the doctor.'

(It is believed that the kinsmen of one bound with ropes will suffer from the disease *engoje* if treatment is not adequate.)

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29. CHRISTIAN SCEPTICISM OF WITCHCRAFT

Nsangalefu (Christian Elder, an early convert).

'At first when we repented, the missionaries asked us whether we believed in witchcraft, and we said: "Yes, there is witchcraft", and we told them about it and the wounds found in the bellies of people who have been killed by witchcraft. So the missionaries said to us: "When there is a death tell us, and we shall go and look." I was taken once by Klaus (a missionary) to a death. I was afraid to go near the corpse—everyone was afraid—but the missionary stood over the grave and looked at the corpse and even put his hand inside (the stomach). The person was said to have died of *igobe* (a kind of sorcery), but Klaus said he had died of a disease of the chest. He told people to come and look. Mwaipopo (the chief) was there but he refused to come and look; they all refused. After some time I came and Klaus showed me. In this way we have been and examined corpses, and we have never seen the wounds of witchcraft. . . . Klaus used to go round to funerals, examining corpses. . . . Ndabele here has seen a corpse which the pagans said had a python. Last week Ndabele went to a funeral near Itete and the pagans said there was a python inside; the woman (who had died) had been a witch. He said: "Let's see the python, let's see it", but no one could show it to him.'

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30. SORCERY

Mwakiomde (doctor, brother of a chief).

'When they open a dead person and find the intestines red, black and white in different parts, they say the death is due to sorcery (*ubutege*). They go to the doctor and get medicine for the relatives. 754 763

'Sorcery comes very quickly, especially when they have done an autopsy. Then the one who takes the body in her arms, and the one who buries after the operation, die very quickly. If the body has been opened the disease spreads very quickly. In one case thirty people died, mostly relatives. In another case, a wife, a girl child, a mother, a father's sister, and a son-in-law (husband of the girl child) all died. The wife died one day, next day the girl child and her mother, then the father's sister, then the husband of the girl. Autopsies were performed on the first three.'

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CHAPTER II

BURIAL RITES[1]

(a) The form of burial

WHENEVER a death takes place, whether of man, woman, or child, 764
a series of funeral rites lasting a month or more begins. The first of the series is the burial (*ifwa*) which, in the case of most adults, lasts three or four days, though for a rich man it may continue for a week, and for a child it is over in a day. For the sake of convenience the account of burial is given mainly in reference to the burials of men; those of women are very similar and occasional references are made to them; but the constant qualifications of statement that would be necessary to give a complete description of both would be wearisome and are unnecessary for our purpose.

As soon as death occurs the women who are present begin wail- 763 ●
ing and messages are sent to the chief, the village headman, and 764
the dead man's kinsmen and affines, to announce the fact and bid them to the burial. The first message is sent to the father, or to a senior brother, if one is still alive, or failing them to the heir of the dead man, and he it is who sends out the other messages. If the father or a senior brother is alive the burial may take place at his homestead, the body being carried there at once; otherwise the dead man is buried at his own home: the choice rests with his father. A married woman is buried at her husband's home if she has borne children, otherwise at her father's; an elderly widow is buried by her son.

Messages must be sent to all the fathers-in-law and all the sons- 602
in-law both of the dead man and of the senior kinsman who 763
buries him, to all the dead man's full and half-brothers, to the husbands of his sisters, to any classificatory brothers with whom he exchanged cows, to his mother's father or brother, to the full and half-brothers of his father, and to his sons. If any one of these

[1] This description is an amended version of that published by Godfrey Wilson in 'Nyakyusa Conventions of Burial', *Bantu Studies*, 1939. The theoretical analysis differs somewhat from that offered in the paper, for the ritual element appears to me to be dominant at the burial as well as in the later 'farewell to the dead'. Between us we attended thirty funerals, in whole or in part.

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602 763 is forgotten he will be angry: 'It happens sometimes that a kinsman comes in later, after the man is buried, and is very angry because no message was sent to him; he comes in a passion, and perhaps he beats his brother [the one who should have sent him a message]. Then the others catch hold of him and say: "Why do you not come soberly and greet us decently with the appropriate words? Come now, why?" And if he does not stop they beat him.'

602 764 These kinsmen and affines, with their wives and children, are under obligation to come to the burial, unless they are sick. Young children under the age of 10 or 11 are not obliged to come, though they often do, but older children must do so. One reason for the continuance of the burial ceremonies for three or four days is that this gives time for relatives from a distance to receive the messages and come. Deliberately to refuse to send a message or, on the [578] other side, to refuse to come to a burial for no good reason, is a symbolic breaking of the bond of kinship and no one ever does either, unless there is a serious quarrel and all economic and social relations are being broken off between the two families concerned.

621 764 577 The village neighbours also are obliged to come to every burial in the village. They normally wish to do so, but, even if they do not, they still come for shame or for fear of being accused of witchcraft if they stay away. Where there is friendship the neighbours come in grief and sympathy and quarrels are softened by the fact of death, but, if the memory of enmity still persists, then the last sanctions are shame and fear: 'Some people mourn more than others.' 'The men who knew him say: "Let us go and mourn him."' 'Those who did not know him intimately mourn because each thinks: "He has died, my neighbour, and so will it be with me one day."' 'If I have quarrelled with my neighbour and he dies, I go to his burial for I say to myself: "It is true that while he lived we quarrelled, but now he is dead and we shall never meet again. I too will go to his burial and mourn him."' 'If a village neighbour does not come to a burial we say he is unkindly and unsociable.' 'And if a man does not go to his neighbour's burial then at once people say: "It was you who bewitched him. Why else do you not come to bury him?"' Several of the accusations of witchcraft recorded had been occasioned by a man's absence from a village neighbour's funeral. For it is believed that witches are chary of going to the burials of their victims lest the dead should rise and denounce them.

693 764 A chief normally goes to all burials in his own country, except

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those of very young children. 'He goes because it is his subject who has died: he is like the senior kinsman of the whole country, he rules all.' 'If a chief omits to go to a burial people say nothing, they know that he is always going to burials and they think that perhaps he has some urgent business. But if he constantly misses burials then people say that he has no affection for his people, that he does not come to bury them as is fit; and if a chief hears them saying this then he is ashamed.' Sometimes a chief who is busy will send a son to represent him. And he sends the drums to beat the lament. 'The drum *is* the chief . . . they cannot beat the drum before the chief has spoken.'

Besides the chief, the villagers, the relatives, and the drummers, there come also personal friends of the dead man from other villages and chiefdoms. And beyond all these there often come others who are attracted not so much by grief and sympathy, nor even by the obligation to express these feelings, but rather by the dancing, the crowds and the possibility of getting some meat to eat. Not all those who come stay the whole three or four days, while the relatives who live at a distance often do not arrive until the second or third day.

The Nyakyusa believe that in order to protect the living and avenge the dead it is most important to discover the cause of death. To do this they summon a doctor to perform an autopsy,[1] an operation fearful and repugnant, but felt to be necessary. The symptoms are interpreted in terms of witchcraft or sorcery, or other supposed causes of disease.

On the first, or early on the second, day after death, the burial takes place. The grave is dug in the swept and beaten earth that immediately surrounds the huts. The first spit of earth is always turned by the eldest son of the one who has died. At one burial we saw the young eldest son of a dead man being helped to do this. He was too small to manage a hoe by himself so he caught the handle near the blade while an older relative held it behind to steady it for him. The digging after the first spit is done by a skilled grave-digger, who may be a kinsman or not, with the help of others. The grave is ten or more feet deep with a cave at the bottom to one side. Some graves are oblong, some round or oval,

[1] This is certainly traditional, cf. D. Kerr-Cross, 'Centre Lakes North of Lake Nyasa', *The Geographical Journal*, V (1895), p. 119. The custom is also reported for the Nyamwanga. For a description of the autopsy, cf. Monica Wilson, *Good Company*, pp. 247-50.

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764 (*Ifikuuka kukyeni nenyambala bo banyuka, bo baputile abanyuka tukubakaga: lenga tukanyaguula tukubepa ikigili! Abanyuka bo bakaaskaga bikujamo; papo lenga tumalile po baxokile munda. Leli bikwandenya kangi tukuja nabo bwila!*)
842 What we do comes from the shades and from Kyala himself. The
831 blood is theirs and his together. Those who create (*akukumba*) a child say: 'I am just eating at a woman,' but Kyala creates a child! If Kyala and the shades do not 'cook' [i.e. do not cause desire] you will do nothing, the penis is flaccid, but if Kyala has 'cooked' then you really do something, your heart (*ukukumbala*) is full of desire. Always the shades are there and we drive them away, they are there and we drive them away. . . .

775 A shade is resurrected in the body of his child (*Unyuka ikunyuka itolo mumbali gwa mwanake*). . . .

764 Passing the basket of pumpkin-seeds, millet, and lentils between the
775 legs and on to the head and throwing to one side means: 'Here between the legs there is work, may they go out in intercourse, and from the head where we dream, may they go out also.' Because in the ritual we say: 'Let them come into the body' at first, then we drive them away. Rubbing ourselves in the earth and passing millet between the legs means: 'May they come';[1] throwing millet and so on to one side it is to drive them away, that they may go out.

QUESTION: Which shade do you drive away?

MWANDEMI: He who has just died, we drive him away.

QUESTION: What about the first ancestor?

MWANDEMI: He is there at their place [the place of the shades], we drove him away long ago, he just receives him [the newly deceased].

QUESTION: Why the pumpkin-seeds in the bananas?

MWANDEMI: It is the semen (*ulukungu*) for begetting children. . . .

QUESTION: Do the shades always come when a man dies?

MWANDEMI: Yes, they always come, they receive their fellow. Yes, even though he has died from sorcery they come and receive him, and even though he has died from witchcraft they come, the shades receive him, and if it is from illness he has died they also come. There is no
[761] death without the shades, they always come to receive their fellow.

When the witches have 'eaten' someone the shades come to receive
764 him. No, the witches eat him alone, but the shades receive him. Some-
775 one may get up in the morning and say: 'I dreamed they ate me and I
● 763 was with the shades!' Then he is about to die. Sometimes someone
828 dreams and says: 'In the night I was in the land of the shades with so-and-so, I left him there, I escaped myself and came home.' Then his friend is about to die.

764 If you do not perform the ritual you go mad (*kukyembala ikigili*) or
775 perhaps you get very thin, and are unable to die, you are ailing and do

[1] i.e. the participants identify themselves with the deceased.

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QUESTION: The water dripping from the little hut?

MWASALEMBA: If we omit this then the children when young don't go mad, but they vomit a watery fluid, and people say that we have not performed the ritual of water for them.

QUESTION: The meaning of leaves and fruit of bananas?

MWASALEMBA: Yes, it is because those who run mad throw away their clothes and wear leaves. So in the ritual we make them wear leaves; we think that if we don't do this they will have the madness and throw away their clothes. The leaves of plantain belong to the man (the father), those of sweet banana to the woman (the mother). They signify the completion of the ritual, both of their father and of their mother. We make them wear both kinds of leaf, even if one parent is still alive, because they begot them together, their blood is one, the man's blood and the woman's blood. The plantain fruit which they insert in the leaves in front is the procreative power of the father, it is like his penis; the sweet banana which they insert behind is the fertility of the mother, it is like a bark-cloth. We throw them away in the water so that they may float away, it is a sign of death; the blood of our parents which was one is finished now!

QUESTION: The leaves on the neck?

MWASALEMBA: When they run mad people do this, they wear leaves on head and neck.

QUESTION: The stones on the head, in ears, mouth and fingers?

MWASALEMBA: That is a symbol of death. Does not the corpse resemble a stone? It neither speaks nor hears; it does not hoe, or work with its hands at all. He whom we have buried is like a stone. We throw his death away into the stream.

QUESTION: The little hut?

MWASALEMBA: That is for cooking food in; we don't cook for him [the dead man] in the house because we did not bury him there but outside, so we cook for him outside. . . . We grind millet in the doorway [778] because the doorway belongs to the shade. We say: 'Receive us, oh shade, since a person has died, receive us!' Because if we enter into the house we are with the shade, and when we come out we are with him, the doorway is the shade's (*ikifigo kya nsyuka*). It is like the pouring of water on the thatch; when we have come from bathing, we enter and come out again, the doorway is the shade's. And at other times, if someone is ill and the shade has been brooding over him, he stands in the doorway and prays to the shade (*ikumputa unsyuka*). Yes, when a man dies the shade broods over (*ikutobatela*) us living.

[761]

QUESTION: Does death come from the shades?

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MWASALEMBA: Yes, when I have lain down at night, in the morning I tell my children: 'So-and-so and so-and-so came to me, I have eaten their food, they came to carry me off.' Then there is sickness and they say: 'The shades have brooded over you, you will die.' It is death in-

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763 deed. We wash at the eating of millet to say: 'You shade, this millet which we eat comes to you because you brooded over us.' We wash our hands and mouths.

764 QUESTION: Why do you eat millet?

775 MWASALEMBA: The millet belongs to the shade. When we brew beer we put some in a calabash cup, but it is not drunk, it is left for five days and becomes lees [i.e. the liquid dries up], then we say: 'The shade has drunk it.'[1] We pray to him and say: 'He is angry.' We brew beer and pour it out in the banana grove, and say: 'You shade, what are you angry about, why have you brooded over the beer?' (They go first to divine.) We speak in the evening in the banana grove and all the children listen, and my wife in the house.

Similarly, if a cow calves and then does not take to its calf, does not lick it, then doctors say: 'The shades have caught hold of the cow, they have brooded over it. Then I pray with water only [in the other case there is both blowing out water and pouring of beer], and I speak as before. Then in the evening the cow takes to its calf and we say: 'The shades refused to let it recognize its calf.' That beer stays for two days —it's not strong!

764 QUESTION: The licking porridge off the mid-rib of the banana leaf?

MWASALEMBA: We eat porridge and he [the shade] eats. We eat off the mid-rib of the banana leaf because the banana grove is the shade's. When someone has died we cut the banana grove, and in the banana grove we pray. It is the shade's own.

764 QUESTION: Throwing beans into the pot?

775 MWASALEMBA: We say: 'You shade! We are eating these beans. Since you have brooded over our fellow who has died, receive him.' For we do not pray to him who has died now, but to that first one who died first. If we do not give him beans then the beans dry up, they shrivel in the fields and people say: 'The shade is angry. We have made a mistake in not giving him beans, we have not taken care of our fellow, his child.' Because the shade creates the beans. Yes, he, the shade, creates all foods, millet and maize and all.

764 QUESTION: The stealing of bananas?

MWASALEMBA: The millet and beans used are those of the house, but the stem of bananas must come from the house of a friend because bananas belong to the shade. Do you pray to him in the hoed fields? In the millet? You pray to him in the banana grove! Because of this you seek another's banana stem!

764 QUESTION: Circling round the fire to the harp and singing?

775 MWASALEMBA: The first shade who has died we have within us, he has brooded over us, we make him circle round, we are with him.

[1] At the drinking of the beer of inheritance in the Ndali ritual the shades are called upon. 'If the beer froths up that means the shades have heard', and the calabash cup is dashed to pieces on the hearth.

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CHAPTER VII

RITUALS OF MISFORTUNE

845 An abnormal birth is the most dangerous misfortune that can befall a family in Nyakyusa society, and the ritual to ward off its expected results is the most elaborate, but there are lesser misfortunes also, which may be averted by simpler rituals.

753 (*a*) *Cleansing after spearing*

682 When one man has speared another and killed him, even though the action was legitimate (as slaying an enemy in battle, or a cattle thief or an adulterer caught *in flagrante delicto*), the slayer and his relatives dare not eat together with the relatives of the slain, or enter their houses, lest they themselves, and the kinsmen of the slain also, fall ill, coughing, spitting blood, and wasting away. This sickness is known as *ulukwego*, 'the disease of spearing'.[1] Both parties are thought to suffer primarily from contact with each other and both protect themselves by drinking medicines, but they drink separately, each engaging a doctor to treat them. We were told:

[763] If one man kills another it does not finish. He begets children and they die; an autopsy is performed and reveals fighting with spears (*isengene*)[2] The disease may not injure the slayer or his children, but the relatives with whom he eats and drinks, and so also on the other side; it may not hurt the children of the dead man, but those relatives with whom his children eat and drink.

We all fell ill, especially the brothers of the slain. The murderer always remembered to drink the medicine because he knew that he had killed someone, but when your brother was slain perhaps you forgot to drink the medicine. Then, afterwards, if you drank beer with someone, not knowing that it was he who had killed your brother, you fell ill.

783 The manner of treatment is as follows:

If I have killed someone they take me to a waterfall and make me

[1] *Ingwego*: a spear. [2] *Ukusegana*: to fight together with spears.

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753 681 believed to be a danger to his kin and descendants, but in a manner somewhat different from the one who has killed another. The sickness is thought to come from the ropes and is called *ingoje* after them.

Mwaikambo explained:

[783] If one member of a family commits suicide by hanging then his surviving relatives, if they do not drink a medicine, will die of the 'ropes', always. If a man hangs himself all his relatives fear; if a woman only her children.

Kasitile's wife, Kiluleli, had borne ten children, but all save one had died. He said:

It is because of the ropes of her father. They bound him at Tukuyu; he died in gaol; it is those ropes which are killing my children. I said to her father [i.e. the heir]: 'Let us go to divine,' but he has not yet agreed to do so.

The death of Mukwabila, a junior kinsman of the Chief Mwaipopo, whose funeral we attended, was attributed to the ropes used to tether cattle raided by his grandfather. Kasitile, himself a distant agnatic kinsman, explained this case also:

One of the fathers of Mukwabila was killed by the hill people. They seized him on the road. So in revenge Mwamusiku, the father of [317] Mukwabila, took twenty cows belonging to the hill people as they passed north, coming from the salt lick. This was long ago. Then Mukwabila's father omitted to kill a cow for those who had helped him to secure the cows. So they were angry and brought *ingoje*—the disease of ropes—upon him. After seizing the cattle he moved to Mwambebule's country in the hills and he was quite well, but then he came back to live here, first sending two cows to the Chief Mwaipopo, but killing none for the people, who were angry and said: 'Why does he not kill for us? What sort of chief is he?' He got weak and fell ill and died. They ●[763] did not perform an autopsy, saying it was forbidden to do it on a chief, and his son died also and was not examined, but now when the younger son died, Mwaipopo said: 'Let us examine him so that we may know.' And it is that old *ingoje*. . . .

The sickness of ropes (*ingoje*) is of three sorts coming from: (1) the suicide (by hanging) of a relative long ago; (2) the binding of a man by other people, as distinct from a man binding himself; and (3) the shocked astonishment of men and their breath. In dreams they put the sickness of ropes into his stomach, they say: 'May the sickness of ropes [828] come into his stomach.' The sickness of ropes lies in wait for an heir. A man dies and the sickness comes on his heir, others are all right; so it

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KASITILE: You sons of Musika had a case against you . . . you fought.
HALF-BROTHER: But that case concerned a woman.

A discussion of the case followed.

KASITILE: Friend, we pray here. Listen carefully.
HALF-BROTHER: I have spoken and not concealed anything.
KASITILE: That's what I say, let us pray well.
HALF-BROTHER: I performed the ritual for him. Let him die with his hair.
SISTER: Let us confess [lit. vomit] we were angry.
HALF-BROTHER: Yes, it is so, we were angry. The cow made us angry.

Mwaisumo described a treatment with *imbosyo* medicines which differed slightly from the one we saw and involved the slaughter of a sheep; according to his account the medicines are coiled in the pot like ropes, and the participants are washed under a waterfall, though they are not made to vomit like the relatives of a murderer. Doubtless the details vary with the officiant, but the principle that medicines are used to rot the ropes remains constant.

(*c*) *Protection against sorcery or vengeance magic*

Sickness caused by sorcery or vengeance magic is believed to spread among kinsmen in much the same way as sickness due to the shedding of blood or binding with ropes, and the ritual performed as a protection against it is very similar to the ritual for 'rotting the ropes' just described. We saw it performed after the death of E. who died on 23 March 1935. Her elder brother (heir to her father) and her husband, who were pagans, wished to perform an autopsy, but her younger brother, a Christian, prevented their doing so. Soon after her burial her mother and husband fell very ill and three weeks later (April 13) the five-year-old son of her elder brother M. died. An autopsy was performed on the child and the diagnosis was that his mother's father, after quarrelling with M., his son-in-law, had drunk medicines to bring death to M's children. M. explained: 'My wife has already buried two children. This boy is the third. Previously we found evidence of *ilyepa*[1] at the autopsy, and this time it is the same. The disease comes from my wife's father.' However, when M. went to confirm

[1] *Ilyepa* is a medicine alleged to be drunk by a senior relative, when he is angry, which, if his anger is justified, will cause his junior relative to suffer in his own person or that of his children.

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ritual they distinguish *abakamu* (kinsmen) from *abandu itolo* (non-relatives) or *abapakipanga* (villagers), and *abakikolo* (those of the lineage of a dead man) from *abako* (affines) and mother's relatives (*abipwa*). These categories have different functions.

(*b*) *Christians*

The performance of family rituals is complicated by the fact that 16 per cent of the Nyakyusa are professing Christians, and in almost every lineage there are individuals who withdraw from the full performance of traditional rituals at death, puberty, and marriage, birth, and misfortune. In most cases such a withdrawal is treated tolerantly by the pagan kinsmen: the Christian kinsmen come to mourn, to congratulate the bride, to express sympathy with the parents of twins; and their non-participation in the washing and shaving and avoidance of ritual meat and beer is accepted. At the funeral of Mwamulenga his preceding full brother, who should have been a principal in the death ritual, was a Christian, and he took no part, though his children went through it. At the funeral of Mwampiki (p. 248) one boy was left untreated on the ground that he was a Christian and a Christian 'should not have two gods'. At the puberty ritual of Mwaihojo's daughter (p. 91) the brother called to wash with her was influenced by Christians and was reluctant to take part, though he finally did so.

Only when a son who is heir to family wealth, or to the office of chieftainship or priesthood refuses the inheritance of widows (as a Christian must do) is there very strong pressure on him to conform to traditional custom: the union of the heir with the widows is held essential to their health. Sometimes also there is acute conflict between different members of the family over the performance of an autopsy, the pagans pressing for it and the Christians opposing it. This we saw in the death of E. when her pagan senior brother wished to examine her, and her Christian junior brother opposed him vehemently.

That Christians cannot take part in certain of the rituals[1] and do not suffer if they omit them is generally accepted. The farewell to the dead at the homestead of the deceased, and the treatment of kinsmen of twins, fall into this category. About certain other rituals, such as the ritual of the gasping cough and the protection against sorcery, opinions are divided. Some of our Christian friends insisted that 'the gasping cough is a real illness' and cited

[1] There are minor differences in the rules of the different missions.

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577 777 556 There is much more talk among the Nyakyusa of misfortune from the shades or the anger of neighbours, than of blessing, but there is an idea, somewhat vague but real, that generosity and kindliness will bring blessing (*ulusajo*). Ambilikile, a Christian teacher who had grown up in a pagan home, said:

> My mother tells me that my father was in the habit of feeding people, those who were not his relatives. People went to a distance and brought medicines for fertility and gave them to him, hence they said: 'He is very kind; food never grows short at his home.' She also told me that my father died very old. He did not die of disease, but of old age, no breath being left in him. This was because men were always saying: 'May they stand by him, may they bless him (*bammwemelege, bansajege*),' not to his face but to others. They said that he lived long because of the blessing of men. Yes, they say that the food of a kindly man never gets finished, that of a stingy man finishes; he himself suffers hunger.

●763 Mwaisumo described a father on his death-bed blessing a favourite son, allocating cattle to him, and telling him:

> Care for the children I have left, keep on good terms with them, then you will be rich in everything like your father. I cared for my children, I was not harsh (*nkali*), so complain to me of anything that troubles you. If you are like this the property in your home will be plentiful, people will be astonished and say: 'He is like his father.'

431 775 Of a man given a cow by the chief, it was sometimes said: 'The shades have blessed him; he has a righteous (*ngolofu*) shade.'

754 673 621 Although our Nyakyusa informants talked a great deal about the danger of neglecting rituals and angering senior relatives, living and dead, the number of cases of misfortune attributed to their anger is small in comparison with the number attributed to witchcraft or 'the breath of men'. (Ten as compared with sixty-three.) There is no reason to suppose that one type of case was concealed when the others were reported to us, and it is clear that the Nyakyusa prefer to make neighbours in the age-village, rather than kinsmen, the scapegoat for their misfortunes. Even when the wrong done is against a kinsman it is often the neighbours, rather than the shades, who are said to have brought punishment on the wrong-doer.

777 621 At the same time, we were assured by one informant after another that people blame the shades or Kyala for misfortune when it is really the neighbours who are responsible! Angombwike argued that men fear to accuse the neighbours, who are slow to

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younger half-brother, Mwaisalwa. The dead woman is a wife of Mwalemba (Kanjesi) another half-brother. Kanjesi was an old inhabitant of this village but he moved to Masebe. His wife was on a visit to her 'fathers' at Mwakalobo's place in the hills. She went to a funeral there and fell sick and died there yesterday. The corpse was brought here this morning. It is now 10 a.m. and the grave is half-dug. The owner of the homestead, Mwampiki II (Mwaisalwa), is not here, he is sick at Masoko where he had gone for a case. The husband is not yet here either; they have sent for him to Masebe. The dead woman's elder sister and co-wife is here, and their mother.

They went to fetch a doctor to perform an autopsy, offering him 20 cents, but came back without him. 'He refused,' they said. 'Well then,' said Kakuju, 'take him a cloth, doctors do not agree to come for just a little.' So they took him a cloth.

Kakuju told the women to come out of the house as it was too small to hold them all. The corpse was carried out into the shade of an *unyunguti* tree. All the women gathered round wailing, about seventy of them, and about twenty men.

No cows have been killed yet as neither the husband nor Mwampiki II are here. No drums are here yet either. The grave was finished about 11 a.m. I asked Kakuju about dancing at death. He agreed that in the old days they had only danced the war-dance. 'That was our old custom. Formerly we fought and killed people—the men of Mwangomo (another chief) who came to the funeral!' Mwambuga (the husband of the dead woman's husband's sister), who had been quite cheerful heretofore, suddenly began weeping and crying. He walked over to the women and joined in the wailing. Some small and naked children started climbing joyfully on the piled-up earth from the grave.

Now it is noon and there are thirty-five to forty men present and ninety to one hundred women. A doctor has agreed to come (to perform the autopsy) but has not yet arrived. Although the corpse was outside male mourners went into the house on their arrival to weep. An older woman got up and led a dirge. I heard her say a number of names, among which 'Mwampiki' was distinguishable. Clapping followed her words. Often she just called the war-cry (*akalulu*). The others wailed and joined in the war-cry. She accompanied her wailing with rhythmic movements of the body and arms. After a time she sat down but continued to lead the wailing.

Mwakalabela (Mbalakatela) arrived with a cow. His daughter is married to young Mwaijumba, the son of Mwampiki. The autopsy followed (for description see *Good Company*, pp. 247–9).

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Angombwike told me at breakfast that now Mwampiki himself was dead. He died yesterday at Masoko and was carried here last night.

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MISFORTUNES ATTRIBUTED TO SHADES

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Ref.	*Category of sufferer*	*Misfortune*	*Category of shade*	*Alleged sin*	*Investigation*	*Ritual performed*
1.	Man. Katasya	(a) Crops did not grow (b) Katasya died	'Abapasi'	Quarrelling with kinsmen	Autopsy disproved this. Found to be sorcery	Killed a bull for family
2.	Children of village headman	Death of several children	Father of village headman	Village headman moved to father's homestead though told by father's neighbours he should remain in young man's village where he was headman	Autopsy	Prayer
3.	Cattle	Cattle died at father-in-law's (and would have to be replaced)	Shades were angry. His brother complained very much when he took all the cattle	Younger brother took all cattle he had from elder full brother to whom they had been handed on his return from work, and gave them for his marriage	—	—
4.	Two girls	Girls died	—	A wrong (*inengwa*) not specified	Autopsy Divination	—
5.	Younger brother	Died	Elder brother	Elder brother not buried where he asked to be	Divination	Buried where elder brother had asked

Ref.	*Category of sufferer*	*Misfortune*	*Category of shade*	*Alleged sin*	*Investigation*	*Ritual performed*
6.	Son	Millet crop cultivated by son failed	Father	Had moved from father's homestead. Left grave unswept	Divination	Prayer
7.	Husband	No fish in traps	——	Stinted one wife of fish	Divination	Prayed in banana grove. Wife confessed her anger
8.	Kasitile	Kasitile fell ill	Mother	Neglected to leave flour or beer in his hut for shades	Divination	——
9.	Married woman (wife of Mwakibete)	Woman delirious		Her newly-married daughter returned from husband without bringing a hen or anything, and drank from mother's calabash cup	Divination	——
10.	Child	Death of child	Father's sister?	Father neglected death ritual of his sister	Autopsy. 'The ritual entered the stomach of the child'	Neglected death ritual performed

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that he has killed, they are astonished and say: 'He should have called us. Does he perform ritual alone?'

QUESTION: But why were those beneath angry in the first place? They are not angry without cause.

LUKUSIVILA: Indeed, they are never angry without cause. There is always some wrong. But we do not know what it is in this case. If you do not kill cattle for your father's burial they are always angry. But we do not know what wrong Katanya committed to make them angry.

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Later Mwanifu came in. He told me that Katanya is still alive, but perhaps he will die this evening. We do not speak with him. He is just breathing. We only ask his wives: 'Does he sleep?' The case is thus: the millet failed in his field and he said: 'I shall pray to my shades and it will grow again.' Then he went to a certain man to get his big bull and gave him a cow in calf, saying: 'Take this and give me your bull,' [937] and later they will give him a little calf worth you. The bull was very big. He killed it. Before he did so he was already slightly ill, but when he had killed it the illness became very much worse. We say they have bewitched him because he stinted his fellows in the village. But they themselves deny it, saying: 'But we always kill and eat ourselves alone. I, Mwainyopolela, killed my animal and ate it alone. Have I died 782 therefore? According to the custom, if I have killed my beast as a sacrifice (*jakuipatala*) then I give my fellows one leg.'

QUESTION: Did Katanya not do so?

MWANIFU: No, Katanya did not give them any. He ate alone. Some wise men give the chief the breast because the chief is the owner of the country. Katanya did not give him that. Yes, if someone dies then the chief is usually given the breast. But when a beast is killed for sacrifice, no one having died, then many eat by themselves. The mourner gives to the chief.

QUESTION: Did he inquire of a diviner or not?

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MWANIFU: We do not know. Some inquire of a diviner. Some think for themselves that the fathers are shaking them. Concerning his death, we are only speculating, saying: 'Perhaps they have bewitched him. They were angry on account of the meat.' But perhaps it is sorcery. See, he was sweating very much on his face. Let him die. We will look in his belly. Perhaps he has been speared. They have bewitched him. Perhaps it is sorcery. We only speculate.

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In the morning Mwaipopo (the chief) was very, very angry. He said: 'Why have you gathered together, you people? Go off home. Do you want to finish off a dying man? It is taboo to gather together. First let a man die, then come to lament the death.'

QUESTION: Is it a Nyakyusa custom to be angry if people gather together at a sick man's house? Is it as if they bewitch him?

MWANIFU: Yes.

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763 QUESTION: Why the gathering?

MWANIPU: We were startled to hear that he had died. They raised the lament of death in the morning and his cattle went home when Kasitile and I were on the pasture land. We were startled to see Katanya's cattle going home and said: 'He has died.' But his relatives saw that he had not died. They said it is taboo to lament when someone is still alive.

QUESTION: Why do cows come home when a man dies?

MWANIPU: It is a form of mourning. They should also weep and say farewell. He had property. For if I, Mwanifo, die, though I do not have cattle myself, yet because I am the son of Mwaipopo cattle are 764 killed at the funeral. It is impressive. But if I were a commoner and 536 had no cattle, then the funeral would be a flop. There would be no meat and people would say: 'He has not yet died, he has left one head.' They count the cattle to kill. If an important commoner dies, one who has cattle, then his funeral is impressive. People dance at his homestead and say: 'Our fellow, who has died, was a strong man who danced the war-dance in the homesteads.' And if he was tough in disputes, if he always got the better of them and no one ever got his cow, then they say: 'A tough fellow has died. May he leave a son as tough as himself. He died with his toughness.' They praise him.

782 QUESTION: Tell me about the killing of Katanya's bull.

MWANIPU: He killed the bull without telling his neighbours, but when he poured out the beer he called Mwainyopolela and Kapuguso and two others. There were four. He had built in Bunkali village in which there are ten homesteads, but, customarily, we do not call all the neighbours, only those who are nearest. Only if I have killed a full-grown beast do I call them all and give them a leg. Yes, it was a big bull and perhaps it is on account of that that they are angry. When they came they were startled, saying: 'They are drinking beer! And there is meat lying outside!' They entered and drank a little. Then Katanya divided the meat for his relatives and took his own. He gave to Mwainyopolela and his fellows three ribs. Then M. said to his three fellows: 'Let us go home. I will not take this little piece of meat.' So they all went away. The other three ate the meat, only M. did not.

QUESTION: So they were angry?

754 MWANIPU: Perhaps! We say sometimes: 'They were angry and ate
787 him.' But perhaps it was sorcery, because just now three snakes entered the house of his chief wife—the *isolwa* snakes. One entered and they killed it. Another entered and they killed it. Then they caught the third to take to a doctor, the son of Mwakanyamale. The doctor said: 'This snake is sorcery,' and he will find a medicine to give them to drink that the illness may be slight. But he has not yet done so.

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QUESTION: When he says it is sorcery, does he mean that the snakes have been sent by someone? 754

MWANYUMO: Yes, Mwaipeja (G. W.), you understand.

5/1/38

Kataeya died during the night. I came to the burial with the doctor, Mwakasamale, meeting Mwamalunda on the road. They told me that the son, Mwakanjwike, had fled from the funeral. 'It is said that he had made love to three of his father's wives. They all fled, the three women and the young man. Yes, they will take them to a waterfall to cleanse them.' 764

I sat by Mwaipopo, the chief. There was a dispute about the autopsy. Kasitile came to the chief to say: 'They are refusing to examine him.' 'Why are they refusing? There is much illness about. Let us examine him and know.' Mwaipopo spoke with heat. Then a relative came and told him: 'Kataeya said: "Do not examine me when I die."' Mwaipopo: 'Why? There is that case of the son (incestuous adultery) or perhaps it is sorcery, or perhaps, if the neighbours refuse to examine him, it is a confession that they have bewitched him. Let us examine him. It will trouble us later on. Also, he was praying to the shades, saying: "The millet failed." Then he died! Let us examine him and know.' 763

Five cows and a bull were killed. About twenty cattle were standing in the herd. The corpse was carried around with wailing and drumming and the cattle were driven round also. Then followed the autopsy. I went with Mwanyumo, with Kasitile's relative, Mwakasenga, and with the brother of the dead man. A woman doctor performed it with a bamboo knife. Another woman kept a hand on the head of the dead man meanwhile. 'You brave ones!' was the comment of the other women, two or three of whom stood watching. The doctor hesitated, as if in fear, before the first cut. Mwanyumo encouraged her: 'Go ahead!' As she pulled out the bowels we all crowded round to look. Mwanyumo said: 'Ropes,' but no one else took this up, and he did not mention it again. They looked into the chest and found something wrong. 'He is burned within! It is sorcery!' 764 763 763 754

MWANYUMO: We chiefs do not fear the commoners, we look for wounds and speak if they are there. But there are none. Look well! If he had been speared there would be much blood, and wounds. But he is burned within. They have worked sorcery against him with Mwangwala. That is the name of the medicine which some Nyakyusa plant. It's sorcery! Then is that of the country (i.e. witchcraft) not there? [324]

It is not there.

How about the son?

That we do not find. He just has diarrhoea.

Mwanyumo then told Mwaipopo (the chief): 'We have examined him, it is sorcery.'

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763 As we came away various people stopped us and asked: 'Have you examined him?' 'Yes, it is sorcery.' Great interest was shown by all in the cause of death.

764 When we first arrived, we found the son a little distance from the funeral and he did not, so far as I know, come near at all. He did not go near the grave when the corpse was buried. I asked Kasitile about bathing at the waterfall. 'They will wash him to-night. Katanya died in the afternoon. At night the son and three women fled. They will wash them at night.'

6/1/38

Kasitile came in to see us at breakfast time. I asked why the son of Katanya had not come near the burial though they had bathed him at the waterfall.

KASITILE: It is forbidden, but they have made a mistake. They have washed him irregularly. According to custom they should first have buried the dead, then, on the evening after the burial, they take them to the waterfall to wash them. When they come from washing, then the son takes a torch of burning grass, he throws it down on the grave, and jumps over the grave. Then they say: 'Let him strike the cattle.' He kills one of his own because he does not eat of those which they have killed previously. This is what they did yesterday afternoon, so it is finished now.

QUESTION: What does it symbolize?

KASITILE: It means it is I who overstepped you.

QUESTION: And when he steps over the grave and the fire?

KASITILE: It is the fire which the women kindled for him who has died.

QUESTION: Do they know who worked sorcery against him?

578 754 KASITILE: Yes, it is the son of Mwaikilaja whose name is Mwamukinga, because when their father, Mwakyandwike, died, the elder brother, Katanya, was a child, and the son of the second wife, Mwaikilaja, inherited. But when Katanya grew up they refused to be on good terms with him and quarrelled with him. But they never worked sorcery against each other. So then when Mwaikilaja died, his sons inherited. Katanya lost the inheritance because they said: 'You are not on good terms with your kinsmen. Let the sons inherit.' So he said: 'I, Katanya, agree.' But later on he was on good terms with those sons of his brother. There were three of them. But the eldest and the youngest quarrelled. The youngest, Mwamukinga, worked sorcery against the eldest, so Katanya told them: 'Do not be friendly with Mwamukinga who is working sorcery against you. Let him be at a distance.' Then Mwamukinga was angry and said: 'Is that wretched elder (*ihale ali*) never going to die?' and he worked sorcery against him. This is the case.

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784 snakes, lions, crocodiles, must not be carelessly killed. Kill a frog, and you will become a leper; the spirit that lived in the frog will see to that. Not that a spirit dwells in every frog; but why take unnecessary risks! As for the lizard, what harm has it ever done to anyone? The stronger and more dangerous animals can take care of themselves; but again, not every one of these is inhabited by a spirit; one that kills people may be safely killed. The two-headed snake, *Ndumirakosa*, may be the temporary dwelling of God Himself, and must not be killed. The owl is perhaps in a different category: it is a favourite dwelling of sorcerers; and some insist on killing it for that very reason, while others say that to kill it is *mwiko*.

Hair must not be swept up, but picked up, and all foreign matter separated; else death may follow, either by witchcraft, or by the action of the spirits. It must not be left lying about, lest goats should eat it; in which case the late owner will assuredly become bald! The hair on the chest again, must not be cut, for one's children will die. All this no doubt had a religious sanction in the past; but no Konde will admit that it is any more than a custom handed down, and for that reason to be carefully observed.

763 784 The jealousy of the spirits demands that a child dying during the life of its paternal grandfather, be buried at the house of the latter, not at its own father's; that the child of a second wife be buried at the house of the principal wife; and that a man who would die well, should die at the house of his

first wife, for it is there only that the spirits meet him; and if he becomes ill anywhere else, he has himself removed as soon as possible to the place where it is proper for him to die, if die he must.

A man who has been falsely reported dead in a far land, must not, on his return home, enter the village without ceremony. Letters sent on ahead to assure his relatives that he is alive, are not enough; his father comes out to meet him; but he takes care not to see his son until assurance has been given that he is a true man, not a spirit; whereupon the father throws some food over his son's head, and both enter the village in peace.

It is *mwiko* to kill a python unless one is sure that it is dangerous. If it is found in the feeding ground, and the cows that day give a specially good milking, then it has been herding the cattle, and is not to be sought for afterwards with hostile intent. But the boys who saw it must go to the doctor to get medicine. Further, God Himself may be in it, or the spirit of a dead chief, and therefore it must be watched for assurance of its friendliness. If it enters a house a fowl is thrown to it, with which, if it makes off, all is well.

Very interesting are some of the prohibitions connected with the white man; and it is obvious that these are of recent growth, so that we actually see *tabu* in the making. It is *mwiko* to go into a white man's house, for the pictures on his walls are the spirits of his ancestors, who are specially dangerous at night, when they may launch an unseen spear at

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787 825 path. But if the serpent crosses to the other side and into the bush, the way is closed, and the travellers will return to their homes, no matter how near their destination they may be. What will happen if they continue their journey is not clear; some undefined evil will overtake them. Parties on the war-path heeded this warning, for it was an omen of defeat if they went on, which, naturally, they never did. If [763] the snake escapes into a hole, it indicates a death at the nearest village; and if a python is seen on the road, the travellers, whose path is not closed, may expect to find the death-wail going on at the first village they come to.

• [763] A two-headed snake, whatever that may be, is a sure sign of death at the place one is going to; and two snakes fighting indicate coming evil, which can only be averted by returning to the place whence one has set out. A tree falling across a path, is another warning, which no man disregards; but the tree must fall within view of the person to whom the hint is given; trees that have fallen otherwise have no significance. But it is worth noting that natives travelling with white men pay no heed to any omens. They are protected by the power of the European, and any significance the omens may have is his affair.

787 825 4. Travellers have their tokens on the way: the people to whom they go have foretokens of their approach. If the fire "speaks," if it makes a burring noise in the flame; if the hens go about uttering low cries; if *amayegdeva*, small black birds with white

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787 ceased. What significance would now be attached to
721 these omens, I do not know. The buffalo, like the
[825] elephant, does not lie, and wise men heed its warnings.
Many years ago a man called Masapa went to the Kinga region, where he quarrelled with the people, and barely escaped with his life. His chief, Mwaisumo, took up the quarrel, and prepared to invade the enemy's territory, undeterred by the predictions of defeat which came in dreams to his prophets, until, on the way, one of his men was killed by a buffalo, and this was a warning not to be disregarded. On their return home, they were received by their women folks, not with contempt and mocking, but as wise men, who were too wary to tempt "Providence" by foolish action. One more war omen. If a man, on the point of leaving for the field of battle, was suddenly, but accidentally, seized by the wrist by his wife, he laid down his weapons, and quietly stayed at home; not for him the joy of battle; he would have been killed, and no one thought the worse of him for heeding the omen.

781 8. Foretokens of death are so numerous that it is
763 difficult even to classify them. Whatever is rare, or unnatural, or sudden, may be taken as a warning of approaching death. A mole seen by day, is a rare event, and full of dread. A Christian living near me saw this wonder in February, 1923, and in the same month he got news of the death of a friend a hundred miles away! No connection? He thought there was. To see the *kanchi*, a small aquatic animal, is to see something so rare that its appearance must be the

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foretoken of widespread death; but no one known to me has had the misfortune to see it. Foxes are said to have increased so greatly since the advent of the white man, that no significance is now attached to their crying; but a generation ago it announced the approaching death of a great chief. There was an interesting recrudescence of this belief in 1914. In July of that year there was a great barking of foxes in the neighbourhood of the Overtoun Institution (outside the Konde country). The news spread far, and the general anticipation of widespread disaster was held to have been amply justified when the first intimation of the Great War was received. A dog howling at night, surely nothing uncommon, still predicts death, and the dog is beaten, not because its howling brings on the evil, or because the beating can avert it; it foretells misfortune, and the forecast is unwelcome, and the unfortunate retailer of information must suffer for lack of common sense.

A cock crowing at night, when no cock should crow, is a foretoken of death, and in the first place of its own; no second time would that cock be the harbinger of news so unwelcome. Sudden things again, an unexpected collapse of a house which looks strong, or of a tree which shows no sign of decay; or of a grave which is being digged, or a pot of beer which falls without obvious cause; these are all of dreadful omen, indicating the death of a chief. The father of the present chief Kabeta, living near Rungwe, was a great planter of trees. As he lay dying, all the trees which he had planted in his youth

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fell one after another, and when Kabeta went to his fathers, he had no more trees to his credit than when he was born. The fall of the village tree, planted at the installation of the chief, shows that he in whose honour it was planted is about to go to the spirit-land.

9. The heavens give very few signs. If the full moon is red, with a red circle around it, plague is coming. If the sun "builds a house" (*nimbus*), some woman is about to give birth to twins. Worst of all, naturally, is an eclipse. "*Kyala asambwike*," they say, "God has lost patience, He is going to kill us all," and they go out with drums and wild shoutings to induce the Supreme Being to go away to the Basango.

What has been described in the foregoing paragraphs is called *kusura*, to foreshadow, forecast, the agent being entirely unconscious of the significance of the action. There is another class of actions which also forecast; but although the difference is not very obvious, a different word is used, *kusikura*, which sometimes means to insult, but commonly to act as a pointer to coming evil. Such actions are mostly unnatural; many of them are in themselves evil, and their occurrence is regarded as a portent.

1. Unnatural anger. Anger in a child is a phenomenon of awe. If a grown-up person arouses it—not in his own child—that person has received warning that his death is near. How this comes about is not clear. Some natives say that the anger is a sign, which cannot be explained; others that the child

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security. As already said, no heathen house is without this protection. Gardens and cattle kraals are protected in similar ways. 189 754

But witchcraft spreads its nets far and wide, and it is not enough to protect the house, for a man may be attacked outside. To meet this menace, other measures must be taken. Each person drinks a decoction, and swallows a tiny white stone, found only in the Malila district. The effect of this is to enable him to see in dreams any dangers which threaten him personally from witchcraft; and to make assurance doubly sure, some persons wear charms on neck or wrist or ankle.

No one knows when danger will come upon him. One who looks you steadily in the face is probably a wizard; why else should he look at you so? One who does not return your salutation, or returns it half-heartedly; one who denies the reality of witchcraft; one who is a notorious invader of the rights of husbands; all such men (or women) are to be avoided, for they are all probably dangerous.

And the reproach of witchcraft follows one after death. If the *post mortem* shows marks on the internal organs, the person has died of witchcraft; but if the bowels are swollen or blackened, either to the right or to the left, the dead man was beyond doubt himself a wizard; the swollen condition indicates clearly the presence of the two serpents which were the source of his secret powers. Any suspicion that was formerly entertained against him is now confirmed, and his heirs may find themselves involved in demands for reparation. 754 763

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755 family who have not had smallpox, but it is evidently not greatly trusted, for it is used with the formula, "Protection against smallpox is unknown, but let us try. If God and the spirits agree we shall be safe." After this ceremony there must be no quarrelling. Peace in the village is a condition of immunity from the disease.

757 In a considerable number of cases incisions are made in the skin, and powdered medicine rubbed in. This is done for general pains, rheumatism, backache, elephantiasis, toothache, spleen. For toothache, if the pain is in the right side of the face, incisions are made between the great and second toes of the left foot, and the powder rubbed in; if the pain is in the left, the powder goes in the same way into the right foot.

763 *Post mortems* are still conducted in all cases where there is any doubt as to the cause of death. Until quite recently no one was buried without examination, and in some districts that is still the case. The operation is performed at the graveside by the friends of the dead man, the actual operator being as a rule a near relative. If a black substance is found in the gall-bladder, a diviner is consulted, to find out who brought on the disease. If the examination of the gall-bladder yields no result, the heart is examined. Ulcers on that organ indicate witchcraft as the cause of death; fat indicates leprosy. Next, the intestines are examined; if *mafra* (pus) is found there it indicates a kind of rheumatism accompanied with boils. The examination being over, the parts removed are

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restored to their places, and the body is buried; and all who had any part in the operation drink medicine to protect them from the disease from which the man died. 763

For wounds in battle an infusion of the roots of *kamemena* is given to cause vomiting, in case there is blood in the stomach. The wounds are washed with an infusion of *impigi* roots, and bound with leaves of *untugutu*, fresh dressings being applied every day until the wounds are healed. 752 278

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789 ment so often that finally it is either not paid at all,
426 or paid when it is quite convenient for the debtor to do so. To secure this desirable result the debtor, when he learns that his creditor is coming to demand payment, slips out into the bush, where he gets the roots of a plant called *butini*, which he chews as the creditor approaches. A most amiable conversation ensues, at the end of which the creditor begs his friend on no account to disturb himself about the small matter that lies between them: any other time will do just as well, and he will be delighted to call again in a couple of months or so. The same end is attained by incising a powder into the forehead between the eyes.

789 Hunting medicines have already been referred to.
224 One is incised along the bone from the thumb to the elbow; another is taken internally, but this latter is
●763 dangerous, because it leads to a lingering death. When death draws on, instead of dying as common men do, the whole body of the hunter who drinks this medicine becomes helpless; the heart keeps going, the lips move and soft, dumb show ensues. Then his friends come and sing to him: "*Ndembo nyaya mmiyembo*," the elephants are among the trees. The sick man, puffing out his cheeks, emits breath with a whirring sound, which is supposed to resemble a sound made by elephants, and presently he breathes his last.

755 But there are few ills, imaginary or otherwise, for which there are no cures, imaginary or otherwise: and the cautious hunter, finding old age creeping on him, and his hunting days becoming a thing of

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CHAPTER XXIV

Death & Burial

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AMONG the Konde, as among other Bantu peoples, no man dies "unwept, unhonoured, or unsung." However contemptible he may have been in life, he has now passed to a sphere n which he is clothed with fresh powers, which, for god or ill, he can direct upon his living descendants, who take care to give no cause of ofience. He camot, however, punish them for any evil they may have done him while alive; only *post mortem* sins can be visited upon them: neglect of ceremonies, refusal of beer at the funeral, omission of his name when prayer is made, and other tokens of forgetfulness. And the power for harm of each spirit is limited to his own descendants; but chiefs, naturally, can bring misfortune upon the whole of the community over which they ruled in life.

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Immediately a man has died, his eldest child, son or daughter, unless an infant, begins the mourning. "Alas, my father, I too have met trouble!" Then the women, "Ah! trouble comes to you as to others." Next the leader, "My father, my lion, my leopard," naming all the strong and fierce animals to which the dead man is compared; the women say, "Now indeed you are poor"; and the boy replies, "Yes, my

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mothers, my strength is gone, my hope is broken. 763
How poor am I among men!" If he is a boy he is 765
now taken by a kindly relative and put outside, and told not to weep like a woman. During all this time, and perhaps for three days to come, the drum is beating; a slow tum tum at first, but rising later to a more furious noise, which goes on night and day until the mourning is over.

The women now take up the tale, and one goes 765
over all the virtues of the dead, a long wail from the others following upon each statement. Day by day this goes on, as new parties come to the mourning. The women smear their bodies and their faces with clay, and wear bands of banana fibre or of palm leaf on ankles, wrists, and forehead. The men, at the death of an important person, carry spear and shield.

In the meantime some relatives have gone to dig 764
the grave, and others are dressing the dead man for burial. The body is washed, a man's body by men, and woman's by women, and dressed in *manyeta* (body rings), anklets, wristlets, and finally swathed in as much cloth as his relatives can afford to buy, only the eyes being left uncovered. Before the dressing, however, the body is oiled, and if the dead man was a warrior, his *isambanjani* (feather head-dress) is placed on his head.

The women now take up the body, and carry it 763
through the village, wailing as they go. Having shown the dead man for the last time around the familiar haunts of his life, they lay him down near the grave, where mats are spread to receive him. Now the *post*

3: Mackenzie M-5 (ca. 1925) 1925
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763 *mortem* takes place, though in the neighbourhood of Missions and Magistracies the practice is beginning to die out. Only the operators are present, and when it is over the others approach again. The brothers or 764 near relatives of the dead man go down into the grave and receive the body from other relatives who hand it to them. It is not placed in the bottom of the grave, but in a cavity dug into the side, the entrance to which is closed with a bamboo door, before the soil is filled in. The body faces towards the original home of the dead. If the dead man possessed cattle, a curious ceremony now takes place. A cow is brought, and made to look into the grave where her late owner lies, her head being forcibly bent if necessary. The cow is now the property of the spirits, and must never be given away or sold out of the family. Little children of the dead man are handed across the grave, and older children leap over it, and then pull themselves, in a sitting position, over the soil which is presently to be filled in. If this ceremony is properly performed, the dead parent will not disturb the children by nightmares. Its omission is an insult to the dead; but the practice is being abandoned by the more progressive sections of the community. It is at this point that the parting address, given in the chapter on "The Spirits," is spoken. When the soil is filled in, a cutting of *indola* tree is placed at head and foot, to mark the grave.

764 All who took any part in the burying must now 113 wash in running water, which carries off the pollution; and carries off also the danger of the disease

4: Tew E-4 (no date) 1950 FN17 Ngonde FN17

751 witches, who use their power beneficently and spend their dreams in efforts to counter-
626 act the aggressor witches, *avalosi*, who use their power maliciously. The great commoner is the strongest of the former type, and the 'defender of the village'. A man who earns universal unpopularity is subject to a spiritual attack from the 'defenders', and is liable to fall sick from the blast of unpopularity. Belief in this efficacy of the 'breath of men' is one of the sanctions of the accepted social order.[1]

Only magic is believed to have power to punish wrongdoers who are neither kinsmen nor members of the same chiefdom. Magic exerts an influence on the behaviour of kinsmen and affines. The witchcraft of a neglected wife may cause a man to fall sick, or that of his father-in-law may harm his children.[2] The power of witchcraft never acts between relatives, though it might between husband and wife.[3]

751 An aggressor witch was reported in the old days by the great commoner to the chief,
627 who ordered the poison ordeal. If the accused failed to vomit (the dose was seldom fatal), he was proved guilty and killed or exiled, all his cows and property being taken by the chief and the victims of his aggressive witchcraft. If a private individual accused another, both were put to the ordeal; if both vomited, the accuser had to pay two cows to the other for slander; if either failed to vomit he was punished as guilty. The ordeal is now illegal, but men accused of aggressive witchcraft still find it best to fly the chiefdom. Great commoners normally used their witchcraft powers to protect their chief from attack, but if he erred they would join in the attack on him; the nobles of Ngonde had power to exert a similar constitutional check on the Kyungu.[4]

● 763 If death by aggressive witchcraft was suspected, it was proved or disproved by a routine post-mortem examination and by subsequent consultation with the diviner.[5]

Birth

844 A child should be born in its own father's house. A difficult birth is a sign of the
845 guilt of adultery, and is eased by confession.[6] A few days after the birth the mother is
851 anointed, shaved, and resumes her household duties. She later goes on a visit of some weeks to show the child to her own parents, returning to her husband after celebration by both sets of grandparents, and exchanges of food and hoes. The birth of twins was a great misfortune, requiring the segregation and ritual purification of both parents.[7]

Initiation

861 There was no puberty or initiation rite for boys. The initiation of a girl was really a pre-marriage rite. She went through a complicated rite to ensure fertility, in which the husband took part. The initiation lasts some months, and includes several exchanges of food between the families of the girl and her betrothed husband, and ceremonies in which her girl friends of the same village and his friends of his village take part. The girl is tested for virginity during the ceremonies. If she is not betrothed before puberty the initiation is carried out in a modified form, but the full significance is lost.[8]

[1] Wilson, A., 1938, p. 277.
[2] Ibid., J., 1939, p. 38.
[3] Wilson and Hunter, 1939, p. 10; Mackenzie, 1925, pp. 91–3.
[4] Ibid., pp. 91–8. According to H. H. Johnston, if the children died in succession the father was supposed to kill himself, but it is possible that he is commenting a custom of the Southern Tumbuka (1897, p. 417).
[5] Ibid., 1925, p. 51; Wilson and Hunter, 1939, p. 11; Wilson, A., 1938, p. 278.
[6] Ibid., p. 256.
[7] Ibid., A., 1938, p. 92.
[8] Johnston, 1897, p. 443.

6:Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1939 FN17 Ngonde FN17

643 602 "the father of all." All the chiefs were his kinsmen, many of the nobles were related to him by marriage, most of them were personally acquainted with him; and these facts were fundamental in the old constitution of Ngonde.

602 764 431 And so also the great chiefs and their subordinates, and the local rulers and their subjects were united by personal bonds which were given frequent ceremonial expression. At every funeral,[1] in particular, whether of chief, noble or commoner, ceremonial gifts of meat, beer, ordinary food, and other gifts also were made along the lines of the political hierarchy.

764 431 [765] On the death of a chief, a noble or any commoner who had, during his life, had many personal dealings with Mbande, a hen was sent to the Kyungu to announce the death, and the Kyungu then returned one of the imported cloths. When other prominent commoners or great-commoners died a hen was sent to the great chief of the area, who also returned an imported cloth. The deaths of ordinary commoners and less prominent great-commoners were announced only to the local ruler (chief or noble) without the gift of a hen, and no cloth was returned.

Similarly when cattle were killed at the funeral of any great-commoner or commoner a special portion of the meat of one beast (the breast and ribs) was always given to the local ruler.[2] In the case of a prominent commoner or great-commoner, however, a similar portion might be given to the great-chief as well. "Such an action was taken on the initiative of the family concerned, the great-chief never claimed it as of right." But if he himself came to the funeral it was normally done. The local rulers themselves, with their wives, attended the funerals of their subjects, and their wives brought food with them, to assist the family in its entertainment of the neighbours. And, finally, at the death of a local ruler or of one of his family, his subjects attended the funeral, bringing gifts of food.[3]

8. *THE CHRONICLE OF NGONDE COMPLETED* (1875-1937)

OVP We have now finished our systematic analysis of the constitution of Ngonde as it was before the coming of the Europeans. We have had to rely largely on oral tradition and that by itself is always in some degree suspect. Nevertheless the richness and coherence of what is remembered to-day, together with the observable continuity of modern institutions

[1] This accounts exclude the funeral of the Kyungu, which was scarcely carried out by the nobles of Ngonde.
[2] This was certainly so in the chiefdoms, evidence for the fiefs is here lacking.
[3] Vide Wilson "Nyakyusa Conventions of Burial."

9: Wilson E-5 (1934-1955) 1959
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turn round in the belly; people say the earth will go bad in us.' 643
'A child who has drunk medicines will be ill, the smell of the new 778
food or the wet earth goes to the belly.' 789
[788]

The chief eats the first fruits and medicines with the commoner who lies down with him at the commencement of his 'coming out' and 'is his wife to taste with him the first fruits and powdered medicines' and is 'fearful' like the medicines. He is identified with [644]
the chief's body and may be compared with the *isithumsu* of the Pondo chief[1] or the *isula* of the Swazi.[2] His function is to protect the chief against the medicines themselves.

(*c*) DEATH AND BURIAL OF A CHIEF

Both because of a chief's descent, and because of his use of 643
medicines, mystical power resides in his body. 763
766

In the old days a ruling chief was not allowed to die, but was buried while still living, because they feared that if he became unconscious before death he would take away all the food with him, and great hunger would come on us. Men feared *ifingila* medicine in his belly. They said: 'If he dies naturally many of his people will die. . . . He should go alive.' And formerly they buried him with the son of a commoner, also alive, for they said, 'Let him enjoy the company of his mate on the road.' When a chief was sick before the coming out of his sons they tried to keep him alive if possible, but if he was clearly going to die then they buried him like this; after the coming out they hastened his death—but only if he were ill. That was why the chiefs fear the 'coming out' of their sons so greatly. Had Mwaipopo lived in the old days and his heir been alive he would have been buried during his last illness.

When a ruling chief was sick the village headmen sent the chief's wives away and looked after him themselves. Then, if they thought he would, or should, die, they tore off all his nails, those of his toes and those of his fingers, and pulled out his hair, and put them in a pot. After that they buried him by night still alive, with a live person, the child of a commoner whom they had seized very secretly. The pot stayed in the house of the senior wife of the chief who had died, and [778]
they said, 'It is the chief, we are with him still.' This was the sacred pot for the sacred beer.[3] They kept silence about the death for a month or perhaps two months, saying: 'Let the chief go away first.'

And when a younger brother, a junior chief, died, though he died

[1] M. Hunter, *Reaction to Conquest*, p. 330.
[2] H. Kuper, *An African Aristocracy*, p. 38.
[3] Matilda Bailey, *Ancient Rites and Myths*, p. 64.

9: Wilson E-5 (1934-1955) 1959
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643 763 766 naturally and was buried dead, and no human was buried with him, yet they buried a live cow with him in imitation of the custom of the senior, because the junior was also a chief, and the cow was like a person. And now in European times the ruling chiefs are buried with a cow, not with a man, in imitation of the custom of the juniors; but still they are buried at night.

Kasitile denied that chiefs were buried before death, but he admitted that they were smothered.

[793] When the chief was very ill we priests came, Njobakasa and Ngubyo, and I. We took his nails and his hair, we tore them off while he was still alive, he started up and we hid ourselves that he should not see us. Then we attended to him.

Here he made a gesture of stopping up the nostrils. That is, they hastened his death as soon as the nails and hair had been stripped off.

And we dug the grave; we buried him by night, when he had died, when he had gone, with a live cow; we did this at night for it was taboo [784] for people to see the burial of a senior chief. We killed a cow in the sacred grove and we ate it, we the priests, before people heard that he had died. The chief Mwakagile (59) when his death was approaching said: 'My body is sick.' After waiting two days, the village headmen said, 'This illness has defeated us', and they tore off his nails—yes, [778] before he died. If they had waited until after his death, would not the *ifisyala*, the power of chiefdomship, have passed away? But they did not smother him, he just died. . . . His nails and hair were put into a little reed, which they hid beneath an *umuuli* (*Cheplura exalta*) tree at the village headman's, the *umuuli* which grew at the homestead of Njobakasa [the grandfather of the present Njobakasa]. They buried it at a commoner's place, as if to say: 'We commoners are the earth, we have [778] taken the power of growth (*ifyage*) from the chief, these nails and the hair are the power of growth of the country (*ifyala fya muuli fye ifyage fye kise*).

Kasitile took Godfrey Wilson's hand and explained: 'Because, Mwaipaja (G.W.), when you cut these nails of yours do they not grow again?' 'Yes, they grow again.' 'Well, then, where does their growth come from? Does it not come from the body?' 'Yes.' 'Well, so it is, the village headmen take the power of growth (*ifyage*) from the chief, his nails and his hair.'

On another occasion Kasitile explained that formerly the relics had been kept in a pot in the house, but that when Mwaipaya (116) succeeded

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Nyakaloa [the grandfather] ran off with them to Mwalisjo in the hills, where he died so that they disappeared and were never returned to his fellow-priests. Therefore they bury the relics by the *umuuli* tree, at his old homestead, lest someone run off with them again. . . . The hair and nails of the chief are buried there, the earth of the chief will always be heavy. All this is very secret. . . .

Mwandini (107, the old blind chief) told us that

When a chief dies they take his nails and hair and put them in the house of his wife who buries them with medicine for fertility of the soil (*ifuga*), then at the time of planting the village headmen come and take that medicine to plant the food with. This was done on the death of the chief Mwakalukwa (141) and the chief Mwakalinga (142) and others for, it is said, the chief goes off with our fertility (*imbuto yetu*).

Thus, though our informants differed slightly about the details, they were agreed that the power of growth lies in the nails and hair of a chief, and these must be taken from him while he is yet alive, and later used to fertilize the earth.

The burial of a chief's son with a live black calf we saw for ourselves, and the wailing was delayed until after the burial. A distinctive funeral of this sort is accorded to all the sons of a ruling chief and his senior daughter, but not (we were told) to more distant kinsmen. The other mark of a royal funeral is the slaughter of many head of cattle to accompany the deceased and to feed the mourners. At the death of the chief Mwakyembe (99) over 300 head were killed, and Mwaipopo (116) killed thirty head at the funeral of his mother. Since a chief has many wives and daughters he has many affines all of whom must bring cows to kill, and he also has a large herd himself on which to draw. To fail to feed his people at a funeral is to fail as a chief. The whole country mourns for two or three weeks, no one going to work in the fields, or occupying themselves with ordinary business. All smear themselves with mud, as if they were kinsmen, and even the men bind their bellies tightly with mourning belts 'that they may not tremble'.

(*d*) THE CHIEF AND THE 'BREATH OF MEN'

Fruitfulness, the power of growth (*imbuto*), lies in the chief's body and the village headmen have no share in it; they only tend it, taking care that it does not disappear with the dead. But the headmen share with the chief and the priests the duty of 'watching

9: Wilson E-5 (1934-1955) 1959
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Christian ones, do not celebrate and nothing happens to them, so we no longer fear ourselves.' By 1937 the pagan rituals of kinship had been largely dropped in Ngonde, and around Rungwe mission they were disappearing, though in Selya no pagan dared neglect them. They were taken more seriously by the women than by the men, and many of the young men were openly scornful. The young men are eclectic in their beliefs, jeering at the twin ritual when they may be fearful of any neglect of the ritual of death; doubting the power of rain-makers, but terrified of a neighbour's sorcery.

(c) CHRISTIAN RITUAL AND DOGMA

And what are the alternatives to the traditional rituals? Celebrations at death, marriage, and birth continue—probably some sort of ritual on these occasions is universal in human societies. There is no celebration of a girl's puberty, as among the pagans, but the ritual of confirmation is, in one sense, parallel, for it is an acknowledgment of maturity by the acceptance of an individual into the full fellowship of the Church; but maturity in the Church, and the symbolic death and rebirth, are not necessarily linked with physiological development, as they are in the pagan ritual of *ukusungu*.[1]

All the Christian rituals are *communal* in the sense that they are centred in the Church—the Christian community; none is primarily a ritual of kinship. This is most pointed at a christening, when a child is received into the fellowship of the Church, whereas in the pagan birth ritual it is acknowledged as a member of the father's lineage by being given *ilipili* medicine (which is 'the blood of the lineage') by its paternal grandmother. Sometimes both rituals are celebrated by Christians who interpret the *ilipili* as an acknowledgment of legitimacy, and a medicine necessary to the child's health, but this is frowned upon by the more orthodox. A dying man is comforted by the priest or elders of the Church, and in some communions he receives the sacrament, the symbol of his salvation through Christ and his membership of the community of believers. At a funeral the members of the local Christian congregation take the leading part, comforting the mourners with prayers and hymns, digging the grave, and burying the dead. The contrast with a pagan funeral, in which cattle are

[1] The pagan rituals referred to in this section are described in *Rituals of Kinship among the Nyakyusa*.